



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

CITIZEN WORKGROUP

Developing Alternatives for Updating the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan (UMRRFMP)

January 12, 2009

MACo Conference Room (Convening/Charter Meeting)

SESSION SUMMARY

Process Objectives

1. In 6-8 meetings, explore aspects of a fisheries Management Plan for Holter, Hauser, and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs.
2. Within the Workgroup's charter, develop consensus alternatives, and recommend those alternatives to FWP.

Session Objectives

1. Convene the UMRRFMP Citizen Workgroup.
2. Discuss and come to collective understanding of the Workgroup's Charter and the collaborative process.
3. Get started on the process.

Workgroup Members Present

Luckie Bethel
Charles Bocock
Bart Bratlien
Doug Breker
Pete Cardinal
Alex Ferguson
Dale Gilbert

Nick Jones
George Liknes
Tim McAlpine
Dan Nottingham
Darren Raney
Timothy Rauser
Keith Schultz

Dan Spence
Richard Thompson
Pat Volkmar
Arne Wick
Virginia Tribe (Facilitator)

FWP Technical Support

Eric Roberts
Beth Giddings

Completed Agenda Items

Reviewing the Charter

(See Workgroup member notebooks for copy of the Citizen Workgroup Charter)

Warming up – “What do I want from this process?”

Workgroup members listed the following as their objectives for the process and the recommended alternatives for the Management Plan:

- A collaborative scenario
- A valuing of cold water fisheries; cost effective management; satisfactory angler days
- A Management Plan that balances fish, economics, and angler preference
- A balance that satisfies preference; protections of the River in-between Reservoirs; protection of the biology of the River system
- Maximum fishing opportunities so businesses can benefit from them
- High quality user experiences; protection of the resource; a collaborative agreement on the alternatives and a sense of pride about our work
- Consistent regulations contributing to improved fisheries
- A better fishery including more fish, larger and healthier fish
- A Management Plan that takes advantage of the tremendous opportunity for a world call Walleye fishery
- A system that is in balance biologically; decisions driven by biology; more fish, more opportunities and sustainable economics
- Use of the “hard facts” toward a Plan that supports a multi-fishery; high level of user’s success
- Understanding of the value of tournaments
- The best fishery/Plan possible through: Evaluation of data from the prior Plan; using biology/science/data rather than yielding to pressure; a look at the whole system
- Reservoirs that are accessible and available to kids who are fishing; a flexible Management Plan based on data – an adaptive management approach built into the Plan
- We contribute to keeping the sport alive through kids; maintenance/increase in opportunities to access water; useful regulations (beyond for kids’ reading lessons)
- A value for the interests of local communities and the economic connection to the fisheries
- Ways to attract young people to the sport

General Observations Based on the Workgroup Member List

- We have a lot of data to review.
- A healthy, balanced fishery seems to be the driving force for Workgroup members.
- Several comments indicated value for a multi-species fishery.
- It will be important for us to look at and blend biology with social and economic interests.

Ground Rules and Process Agreements for Productive Discussion

Workgroup members established and committed to the following ground rules and process agreements to encourage production discussion in the process:

Meeting attendance

- Attendance is basically “mandatory” – for the best interest of the process and the Group’s outcomes. Acknowledging that there are emergencies, etc., Workgroup members will contact Beth or Ginny prior to missing a session.
- Workgroup members will not use substitutes or proxies if missing a meeting.

Communication

- Members are requested to raise hands to be recognized by the facilitator.
- To support civility and courtesy, allow the other to finish without interrupting.
- Members are asked to manage their own communication – style, length of time, body language, no vulgar language, no name-calling, etc.
- The Facilitator will help manage the length of time of the person speaking.

Process to encourage coming to agreement

- Members are asked to describe the issue they are bringing to the table. Full Group discussion will follow, monitored by the Facilitator. The Group will decide how far to take the issue, the disposition of the issue, etc.
- Members will aim for 100% agreement and work hard to get there. At points in the discussion, the Facilitator may ask for a relative showing of support for the item at hand to determine the level of majority and minority. She will use an interest-based approach to help the group increase the majority. When the Facilitator feels that all attempts have been made to solve the minority’s issues, she has permission to:
 - Ask the Group to table the issue for later discussion or;
 - Move the group to agreement – one way or another - if there is a super majority (80%/20%) of those present.

Media

- Eric (FWP) will be responsible for relaying information from the Workgroup to the media. Members approached by the media will direct the media to Eric.
- It is recognized that Members will report back to their constituents.
- Individual members are asked to couch their comments as personal opinion and not the view of the Group.

Establishing Context for Discussion

Pertinent Factors in the Current Operating Environment

- Forage is an important determining factor.
- There are limits on management techniques and what they can accomplish.
- Multiple government agencies are involved and have some responsibilities (Fish, Wildlife & Parks; US Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation)
- Multiple angler organizations have interests in the process and outcome.
- Angler preference is a factor.

“Hard Facts”

- The system is out of balance.
- A realistic balance is critical for the whole fishery.
- Shoreline access is very limited.

Important Questions

- Are users/interests satisfied and if not, why not?
- What is a realistic target relative to abundance for all species?
- How can flushing be mitigated?
- How are stocking numbers determined and are they appropriate? If not, what should they be?
- How can the forage base be improved?
- What is angler preference?
- What can/should be done to enhance trout populations? Perch?

Data Needs

- What is the age structure of fish in the system?
- What is the current condition per species (i.e., size, abundance) and what are their growth rates?
- What is the condition of forage including zooplankton? How much forage is needed per fish, what kind, for what size, etc.?
- What is the total population of all fish, forage, micro-organisms, etc.?
- What are your findings from the most recent Fall sampling? What do creels, nets, etc., tell us?
- In an overall sense, describe the dynamics of the system?
- How do we define “healthy fish”, a healthy fishery?
- What is the maximum biomass potential?
- What are the effects of slot limits?
- How do carp numbers affect balance?
- What effects do birds have on the system?
- What are the effects of angler pressure?

Getting Started in the Collaborative Process

First Cut at “Interests” at the Table

- It's in the interest of angler/recreation businesses to have species diversity.
- It's in the interest coldwater anglers restored cold water species such as brown trout fishery below Hauser and where appropriate, Kokanee.
- It's in the interest of anglers to have Walleye number in balance with other species so there are more of all fish
- It's in the interest of anglers to have diversity in species to spread out the fishing pressure.
- It's in the interest of walleye anglers to enhance the walleye fishery meaning better quality fish, larger and easier to catch.
- It's in the interest of anglers to get perch and trout (or possibly another forage fish) numbers up so the forage base is healthy.
- It's in the interest of anglers to limit walleye on Holter.
- It's in the interest of this process to analyze and understand the role of carp in the system.
- It's in the interest of kids who fish to and quantity and quality fishing opportunities.
- It's in the interest of kids who fish to have biological practices in place that improve habitat and fish populations.
- It's in the interest of kids who fish to have prey fish enhanced through increased planning of trout.
- It's in the interest of kids who fish to have a multi-species fishery.
- It's in the interest of FWP to maintain the fisheries resources through easily understood regulations and closures where needed.
- It's in the interest of FWP to maintain the highest quality fishery and fishing opportunities for trout, perch, walleye, etc.
- It's in the interest of FWP to enhance and maintain the highest forage base possible in the Reservoir complex.
- It's in the interest of FWP to maintain safety, sustainable harvest, and commercial and recreational use on flat water and the tailrace.
- It's in the interest of FWP to develop viable, realistic alternatives to evaluate and use in the Management Plan.
- It's in the interest of FWP to restore and maintain summer and winter fisheries.

Where do we go from here?

Setting the Calendar

- The Workgroup will meet from 8:00 AM – late afternoon on the following dates:
 - February 23
 - March 6
 - April 20
 - May 4
 - June 8
- Meetings will be at the MACo building in Helena unless otherwise announced.
- Members will also be asked to attend a public meeting or two – not everyone for everyone – just representative of the Group.

“Homework”

Workgroup members are asked to:

- Run a trapline by identifying 5-7 people of your choice (some who think differently than you do) and casually pose questions to them throughout the process.
- Read through the 2000-2009 management plan (Beth will mail the Plans to Members).
- Write an agenda statement and have it ready to post on the table in front of your seat at the February meeting.
- Are there additional “important questions” that need to be discussed in this process?
- Continue to think about “interests” and start thinking about guiding principles as discussed the in the January meeting.